

***Carex densa* (Bailey) Bailey**
dense sedge
Cyperaceae (Sedge Family)

Status: State Threatened

Rank: G5S1

General Description: Plants densely caespitose, the leaves and culms from short rootstocks; culms 12-28 inches tall, erect, usually exceeding the leaves; blades flat, $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch wide; ligule conspicuous, as long as wide; inflorescence paniculate, the branches closely aggregated to form an oblong to ovate head $\frac{3}{4}$ to 2 inches long, the spikelets androgynous, closely congested; pistillate scales acute to cuspidate, about as wide as the perigynia but shorter; perigynia ovate, $\frac{1}{8}$ to $\frac{1}{16}$ inch long, +/- nerved dorsally and ventrally, margin serrulate above the middle, narrowed to a serrulate beak, the beak half as long as the body or longer, bidentate.

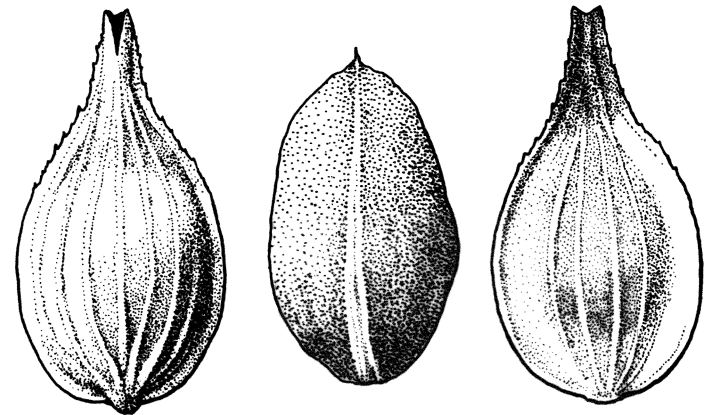
Identification Tips: Similar in most respects to *Carex vulpinoidea* except in *C. densa* the pistillate scales are awnless or with a short awn up to $\frac{1}{16}$ inch long. *C. vulpinoidea* has a definite awn mostly $\frac{1}{16}$ to $\frac{1}{4}$ inch long. Also the perigynia is usually evidently nerved on both sides, or occasionally nerveless ventrally in *C. densa* but *C. vulpinoidea* has at least the ventral face nerveless or nearly so. It is important to have completely mature perigynia to separate the two species.

Phenology: Identifiable June to August

Range: Peripheral in Washington. Coastal mountains from San Diego County, CA, north to OR, chiefly west of the Sierran summits and Cascades to the Columbia River (Wahkiakum County). The species has been reported from along the Columbia River in Benton County, but that report is suspected of being erroneous. There is also a high elevation historical record in the Mt. Adams Wilderness Area in Yakima County. This record needs verification. Occurs in the Columbia Basin, Eastern Cascades, and Olympic Peninsula physiographic provinces.

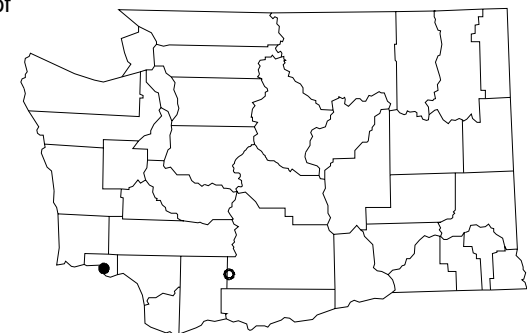
Habitat: The primary habitat in WA is eroding hummocks in intertidal marshland. The species has been reported from small cutbanks along rivers and shaded springs at high elevations, but these reports need further verification. Associated species

Carex densa
dense sedge



©1969 University of Washington Press. Illustration by Jeanne R. Janish.

Known distribution of
Carex densa in
Washington



- Current (1980+)
- Historic (older than 1980)

Carex densa

dense sedge

No photos available.

Carex densa

dense sedge

Habitat (continued): include willow (*Salix exigua*), riverbank wormwood (*Artemisia lindleyana*), Columbia coreopsis (*Coreopsis atkinsoniana*), sneezeweed (*Helenium autumnale*), awned flatsedge (*Cyperus aristatus*), and conyza (*Conyza* sp.). Elevation ranges from 0 to 4300 feet.

Ecology: *Carex densa* occurs within a habitat that is strongly influenced by fluctuating water levels which probably keeps competition with other plant species down.

State Status Comments: There are currently two recent occurrences and one historical occurrence in WA.

Inventory Needs: Additional inventory along the Columbia River is needed. Historical site should be revisited.

Threats and Management Concerns: A possible threat is small population size which reduces the species viability. Erosion, dredge-spoil dumping, and oil spills along the Columbia River are also a threat to the species.

References:

Hitchcock, C. L., A. Cronquist, M. Ownbey, and J.W. Thompson.
1969. *Vascular Plants of the Pacific Northwest, Part 1: Vascular Cryptogams, Gymnosperms, and Monocotyledons*.
University of Washington Press, Seattle. 914 pp.